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THE VOICES OF HARVEST.

THE
Voices of Harvest.

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THE VOICES OF HARVEST.

HARVEST! harvest! harvest! How often have we heard the word lately! What anxiety and bustle has there been about it!

A few weeks ago, before it began, in the country, and even in town, you scarcely heard of anything except the harvest prospects. As you travelled, you saw every one glancing his eye carefully over the country, to mark how the crops seemed prospering. When you began any conversation, the appearance of the crops was in general the first subject discussed. When you first bought or received your newspaper, you turned naturally to the statements concerning the weather, and the various grains and fruits in different parts of the country and the globe. When you went out in the morning, you looked immediately at the sky, to see what signs and promises were revealed in it. You inspected or asked about the glass, before you retired to rest, that you might learn what sort of weather it betokened. Countenances and voices rose and fell, as the mercury rose and fell; all this was because

of the harvest. The world seemed in some degree wrapped in thoughtful anticipation of the harvest. Then, as the time drew on, what an active preparation began amongst those more immediately concerned in the business. Indeed all the preceding year since the last harvest, not to mention the still longer care and forethought in arranging the rotation and succession of crops, is ever more or less one long season of preparation.

People prepared their land, they fed it, ploughed it, manured it, perhaps ploughed it again, harrowed it, broke up the clods, sowed it, watched the seed's growth, weeded it as it grew. They prepared their barns and garner, the places and supports of their ricks. They prepared their threshing or winnowing machines. They prepared their horses or other cattle, their waggon and other vehicles. As the season advanced, the preparation increased in activity and bustle, and extended from the houses of the provident farmer, to the cottages of the industrious labourer.

Employers provided the requisite numbers of workmen, and arranged the order of their work, where they should begin, how they should proceed. They, it is to be hoped, arranged also the wages and prices of the work to be done, fixing everything before-hand, and making definite and clear agreements with their servants, that every one might know what he could earn, and what he might expect; so that there should be no mistakes or disagreements afterwards, no unfair dealing or op-

pression on the part of employers, no suspicions of injustice and hardness on the labourer's side—those so fruitful and mischievous sources of mutual unkindness and ill-will, between those who should be united in one common bond of affection and lovingkindness, as they are bound together in their interests. They also laid in money enough for the payment of their work people, and food enough for the support of those whom they took into their houses.

Then in every cottage, what a noise and bustle might be heard, what a steam of washing, and baking, and brewing might be seen. Everywhere other occupations were laid by; schools were broken up; and parents amid all the children who could help them, puzzled sometimes with a young child in the cradle, and a baby in their arms, were preparing their clothes, their bread, their bacon, their drop of home-brewed beer, in order to be perfectly ready before they began work.

Then, they had also to prepare their implements and tools, to look up their sickles and their hooks, to sharpen and polish them. By every forge and grindstone you might have seen a dozen hanging, which had just been made ready, and were waiting for their owners as they returned from field.

And now the wheat was turning off, and the barley growing white, and you saw everywhere people watching the fields and the sky more anxiously than ever. You heard everywhere notes of immediate preparation. "Mr. A—— will pro-

bably begin on Monday." "Farmer B—— on Tuesday." "Mr. C—— does not intend to set to work till Saturday; his ground is stronger or his crops heavier." "They began a week ago in one county." "They began yesterday at some place ten miles off." "It will not do to wait much longer. The corn is still greenish, but there is a great deal to be done. The work is large—the time short. The weather uncertain. We must not delay any more." So the days were actually settled. Then was seen what we may almost call, a yearly miracle. Everybody seemed suddenly cured of every ailment; every illness which was not very serious appeared to take wings and fly unexpectedly away. People who had scarcely moved out for many days, began to stir restlessly about, and to hope that they should be able to do a little after all. Old grandsires laid down their sticks and crutches, and looked at their withered limbs, which had done so much service in time past, and thought "they should have strength enough left in them," practised and skilful as they were, "to do a bit this one year more at least."

Young children expressed a hope that they might be of some use. The bigger ones could reap or use a hook, and were becoming pretty handy. The lesser ones could help bind. Little Jane, or little Jim could hold the baby, or bring it to Mother when it was crying for her. Husbands and wives in the wisdom of middle life, trusted to be able to use all their families, and turn everyone to some

account. And young men and maidens rejoicing in their youth, and health, and strength, prepared to encourage, and assist those who were younger or weaker than themselves, and set an example of industry and skill to their little brothers and sisters.

All, masters and servants, rich and poor, young and old, were looking forward with that hearty, cheerful, resolute expectation of hard work, which is so healthful a characteristic of English people; to five or six weeks of unremitted labour; labour, hard and without respite, save on the weekly blessed Sabbath rest, yet honest, and necessary, and long wished for.

All, masters and servants, rich and poor, young and old were wrapped up in the busy earnest preparation for their toil, yet all seemed anticipating it as a feast or holiday.

And then, one by one, the appointed mornings came. Directions were sent out by master after master, and handed round immediately from one cottage to another. One after another, each band of reapers went out, and the work began; every house was emptied; all the people were afield; as you passed through the villages, you would have thought that the whole population had been suddenly swept away. Everyone "rose early, and went late to rest, and ate the bread of carefulness." All, as is meet, and right, and necessary, were fully occupied in the work which God appointed them.

How bustling, how beautiful was the scene! how gay the fields, covered with the busy labourers!

How rapidly did field after field render up its rich treasures! How speedily did crop after crop fall before the sickle, or the fagging hook, or the scythe! Wheat, barley, oats, beans, pease, all went down one after the other. How quickly and skilfully were they caught, and bound up, and tied into sheaves, and gathered into shocks, or laid up in heaps, till the sun had done its work on them, and ripened them to perfection. How busily then was all the produce carted away. How did the waggons groan to and fro! How did the horses labour and sweat! How did all, old and young, great and small, man and beast, toil and moil together, from early morning to late evening, before the sun was up and far into the night under the glorious light of the broad harvest moon! How did ricks seem to grow, barns to fill everywhere, as if by magic! People had scarcely time to eat, or even to talk.

Everything in this world, and the weather to a proverb, was felt to be uncertain, and not to be depended on. There was no time to be lost. And no time was lost—no day wasted—till the produce and abundance of the year was transferred from the earth where God had blessed it, to the proper receptacles which man under His guidance had provided for it. Then again, the families issued out into the fields, as each crop was carried, to leaze or glean up all that was left, that nothing might be wasted, not one ear of the precious wheat be lost, but all, even the least remnants of the harvest, be

turned to good account, be made in due time into sweet wholesome bread for the nourishment of those who toiled so hard for it.

The preparation then was busy and active: the work itself more busy and active still. The condensed energy and industry of the twelvemonth seemed gathered up to the full, and poured forth in it without stint.

And now it is done.

Well! What was the meaning of all that long laborious preparation, what the object and purpose of all that bustle and toil?

Why, the harvest.

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Much depended on the harvest. The bread, the life of the whole ensuing year, to a very great extent, depended on the success and prosperity of these few weeks' work. Therefore it was right, and wise, and according to the ordinance and will of God, that we should make such thoughtful preparation for it, and labour in it with such industry and diligence.

For the harvest indeed is God's gift and God's work. "He reserveth for us the appointed weeks of harvest."* "Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat,

* Isaiah xxviii. 24.

and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be thrashing it. This also cometh from the LORD of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." And therefore David chants in that glorious harvest hymn, the sixty-fifth Psalm, "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water. Thou preparest their corn when Thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; Thou settlest the furrows thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers. Thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness, and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness. The little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks. The valleys also are covered over with corn. They shout for joy. They also sing."

And wonderful, and marvellous indeed is the great but secret mechanism, by which God provides and prepares the harvest which He gives us. Above us, and around us, and beneath us the stupendous powers of the great world's machine have been working day and night in silence unheard, unobserved for the most part, according to the laws and rules which the Creator ordained; and during the times and seasons which He appointed for them.

Could we clearly discern the vast and regular operations of creation, by which the seasons are kept in their order, the temperature preserved in its proper equilibrium, the winds driven about in their courses, the tidewaves and currents of the sea made to act upon them, and with them upon the atmosphere, warming it, or cooling it, as is good and needful ;—could we perceive by what mighty ordinances that great instrument for acting on the earth's vital powers, which seems so strangely irregular, the weather namely, is really kept on the average to such wonderful regularity ;—could we see the continual working of the laws of expansion, and condensation, by which the moist riches of the great ocean are taken up into the air, and borne on the wings of the winds to fall in rain or dew, on mountain, and plain, and vale, and even on the parched thirsty desert, to fertilize the cultivated champaign, and nourish the innumerable trees and plants, and herbs, and grains which mantle the wide earth—to circulate underground through the pores and veins of earth, and then through springs, and streams, and rivers, as it were through the globe's great arteries back into the vast receptacle whence for the most part they rose up ;—could we clearly mark and understand the more unknown, and undiscovered agencies of light, of electricity, of magnetism ;—could we count the many mouths in the roots and in the foliage of the forest and vegetable worlds, and see how they feed themselves on the fat of the earth, and the strength of the sky, taking

in all that will nourish, casting out all that will harm them ;—could we distinguish the yet more hidden, and mysterious workings of the living principle in each plant, how it causes the acorn to grow up into the oak, and the corns of wheat into ripe full crops—could we take in at one glance all these vast, and countless, and magnificent provisions and proceedings of nature, by which at the regular recurring season God accomplishes His work, and prepares for us the harvest ; we should indeed cry out for wonder and astonishment* at the manifold miracles of the universe, perceiving by these visible manifestations, “ His invisible things,” “ His eternal power and Godhead,”† and also His great goodness and boundless love for men.

But because the abundance thus bestowed on us is God’s gift and work, is it therefore the less *our* work. Does He not still, and indeed all the more for the plenteousness of His mercies, require of us on our part watchfulness, industry, and labour ? “ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Yes, the work is His, and yet ours, ours and yet His. “ O God, Thou hast wrought all our works in us.”

And indeed our labour, energy, and industry, the toil and work of our thews and sinews, the implements and tools which we use, are His also, His work, and His gift.

On His part then, and on ours also, there is a

* S. Augustine.

† Rom. i. 20.

great preparation and provision made, a wonderful display of energy and care.

And what, let us repeat, is the end of it? What is the object of all these marvellous operations? Why, the harvest—the bread, the life of the whole ensuing year, the support of eight or nine hundred millions of souls hangs on the success of this mechanism of nature, and this industry of man.

By our harvest-work we provide ourselves with enough grain to supply ourselves with seed for our fields, and bread for our eating, food for ourselves and our little ones. Rents and other charges are satisfied, bills are settled, the past year's wages paid, and weekly wages for the following year will be paid, out of the produce of this preparation and labour.

The rich and the poor, the high and the low, are thus equally provided for. Both will flourish, or suffer together, according to the prosperity, or ill-success, of this work. "The king himself is served of the field."

The abundance thus obtained out of the bowels of the earth, and the treasures of the air, by God's gifts and man's toil, will supply means to purchase all other necessities or luxuries, which other kinds of industry and skill will furnish. It will keep up the healthy interchange of money and goods through all the several classes of society. It will promote commerce, and manufactures. It will supply funds for the employment of labour, and the development of resources. It will as it were circulate life

through the whole body of human society from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.

Thus in ricks and in barns, by all that great natural work of God's providence, by all that watching and waking, by all that toil and labour, a year's life is stored away for the world.—And now it is done.

And what then ?

THOU eager busy world, which wast so full of carefulness and labour, thou hast now with infinite preparation and industry laid up for thyself the provision of a year. Thou art now resting, and rejoicing, over the gathered harvest.

Yes, it is done ; and what then ? Thou wilt consume it, expend its earnings, realize its profits, sow its seed, eat its bread, enjoy its abundance : and what then ?

So thou wilt have time, and means, and strength, to reach, prepare, and provide for another harvest. Yes, another twelvemonth, another year, winter, spring, summer, and autumn will roll speedily away. And then the same preparation and provision having been made, the same bustle and toil, and labour will recommence.

The fields will again be "white unto harvest." Hands and hooks will again be ready to reap it ; ricks and barns be ready to receive it. High and low, young and old, grandsires and children, will return to the known and customary work. It will be gathered, and stored away as before.

And what then ?

Other years resembling this now ending will roll on. "Seed time and harvest, and cold and heat,

and summer and winter, and day and night," will proceed in their appointed course. The preparation and the harvest will be repeated time after time. Time after time will it come to an end, and be enjoyed. And these grandsires, these aged men, and aged women, with their thin limbs and white hair, will have been carried into the churchyard; and these strong men and women will have begun to stoop, and grow feeble; their hair will be turning grey, and their limbs withering away. And those youths and maidens will be husbands and wives, full of care and anxiety, perhaps with boys and girls of their own, a whole troop of little ones around them. And the boys and girls will be young men and women. And those babies now borne in arms, or laid nestling in the field will be running and shouting, and working. And then they too will grow up, and their elders grow old; and then they will grow old, and the bell toll for them. And the generation will pass away, and be laid to their fathers, and the human harvest be reaped and stored away. And meanwhile another generation will spring up, and blossom, and ripen, and be reaped, and laid up in store, as that which preceded it. And generation shall follow generation, still growing, ripening, reaped, stored away.

And what then?

"What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth

down, and hasteth to his place whence he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north. It whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; into the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that has been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is the thing which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.”*

Was not each past generation full of labour? Had it not its youthful hopes, desires, and passions, its many cares, and studies, and labours, and affections, its close connections, and relationships, its gradual disappointments, and decays, and separations? How many discoveries have been made, how many books have been written, how many bright dreams of pleasure, and distinction, and happiness, and love, have filled the eager minds of it, as it arose—to crumble, and shatter, and vanish before the lapse of time. How much passing to and fro, how much eating and drinking, buying and selling, how many births, how many marriages, how many funerals, how many light amusements, and gay feasts, how much want and suffering, how many groans and wailings, how many wars and reconciliations, how many schemes and plans, how

* Eccles. i. 3.

many changes of government, how many surprising accidents, how many thrilling joys, how many aching sorrows, how many bitter disappointments, how many smiles and tears, how many songs, and how many sighs, how many deeds of goodness, how many awful and appalling crimes, how many sinners' perditions, how many saints' salvations have been the work of each passing generation. And what remains of them? Little perhaps here. A few traces in the destinies of nations, a few records of one or two most noted events, a few names out of those many millions, chanted in song or written down in history. Yet what a noise and bustle was there! How vast, how busy, how all-important did the work seem to those who were engaged in it. And what remains of their doings? Where are the countless hands which wrought them? and the countless souls which devised them?

The countless hands which wrought them are—dust.

And the countless souls which devised them—gone to meet their God.

Little then remains here—a few names and memories—a few stories, a few gravestones and epitaphs, a little dust. And is this all? Is this the by gone generation? Yes, all here—but not all elsewhere. Not all hereafter.

For the generation is not gone. It is sown. Each body in it, each soul in it had its proper separate individual existence—its own birth, its own growth, its own life, its own work, its own

deeds, words, thoughts, its own relations to its God. And now these are all passed out of sight, but only as grain laid up in ricks and barns, or rather as seed sown into the ground. For if they are sown they do but "sleep;" they are only hidden for a season. They are not lost; not one perishes. Wise men say that in the natural creation nothing is destroyed, nothing annihilated. Its different parts may vary in appearance, dissolve, reunite, become blended with one another, but not one particle ever ceases to exist, ever loses the being which was given it. It is the same, or rather much more is this the case in the spiritual world.

And so both the bodies and souls of every generation remain; each in their appointed places they remain hid from the world, but not from God, nor perhaps from His angels, or from one another. Certainly they are only sown in so far as they will appear again. And their deeds too, and their words, and even their thoughts are not lost, perished, annihilated; all are sown with them, and will appear with them again. And when?

Has the year its harvest? Are all the previous months a preparation for the harvest? Is the harvest commenced when the crops are ripe?

And has not the course of the world, the succession of generations, its end likewise? Is there not an hour when time itself shall be no more? Is not the harvest the end of the world?

Will not all souls and bodies reappear then? Will not all the generations of men come up then

again, and all ripe for the sickle, ripe for the harvest? and will not all their works, too, deeds, words and thoughts, whether known now or unknown, whether remembered now or forgotten, reappear with them in their true colours, not dead but living, living in their eternal effects.

And all the course of this world, all this succession of generations, all their long work which fills up time, what is it but the preparation for that end, the provision for that great Harvest? Then, indeed, nothing more will remain to be done. Then all work will be finished. Then will come the great Sabbath. Then will every man have stored up for himself the year's bread, the year's food, the year's hire, the year's life, the bread, food, hire, and life of the everlasting year which ends not, which then begins never to come to a conclusion.

Then, so to speak, the work of time, and every man's work in time will indeed tell; for "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Then will every man receive "according to that which he hath done in the flesh, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

Then will GOD indeed rest finally from His work. For "My FATHER, saith the LORD, worketh hitherto, and I work," and their work is One. The works of the Holy Trinity are inseparable, undivided.* Each blessed Person wrought in the work of the material creation. Yet is it one world.

* S. Augustine.

And each works in the whole work of New Creation. Yet is that one. And all the work is God's, for "He hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the evil day." "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace and create evil, I the LORD do all these things."*

I think, then, dear Christian readers, that the harvest should bring with it serious and solemn thoughts. After exertion, indeed, and before enjoyment, it is particularly needful and fitting to have such thoughts. It is such a time now. The harvest is over. Let us gather from it some such thoughts. When the mind and body are unbraced from active toil, meditation is natural and wholesome. What fruit, may we then well say, comes of all this work? To what end was all that preparation, and all this labour?

Let us be reasonable, let us have faith, let us be Christians. We made a great preparation. Did we prepare also our hearts and minds? We worked very hard. Have we God's blessing on our work? Are we able to look up to heaven, and say, "Establish Thou the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it?"†

It is always awful to see men engaged in any great earthly preparation, anxious about any earthly matter, wrapped up in any earthly affection; toiling and moiling with all their might for any earthly gain or blessing. It is awful to see any one de-

* Isaiah xlv. 7.

† Psalm xc. 17.

voted to study, or to business. It is awful to see a mother watching her child, or two young persons pledging their mutual vows at the altar.

We cannot then help thinking how short life is, how short, and how very frail. For how short a time can that object which men seek so earnestly remain in their possession? For how brief a space will that mother and child, or those two spouses live together here! How soon will they be parted! And do they remember this?

So even now with this harvest, its preparation and its industry; for how short a time will that which requires such provision, which occasions such labour, profit those so earnestly employed about it!

We cannot help calling to mind that saying, "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light."* We cannot help considering, Are these so provident in preparation, so diligent in labour about their earthly bread, as provident and diligent about the "bread of life?" Are they as careful in preparing themselves for eternity, as diligent in providing for the world to come?

It is wise and right to prepare for our earthly works, it is wise and right to labour at them diligently. It is God's ordinance. It is His decree "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." But are we wrapped up in these works? Are we devoted to them, as if this world were our home, as

* S. Luke xvi. 8.

if we should continue here for ever? Do we love one another, as if we should dwell together eternally in this state of being, as if we and these objects of our affection were only parts and portions of this present world?

Here is our trial, especially if we are free from great and gross sins. Can we be provident and diligent, yet as "to the LORD and not man," doing our duty carefully, yet as CHRIST's servants? Can we eat, as though we ate not, buy as though we bought not, marry as though we married not, rejoice as though we rejoiced not, weep as though we wept not, use the world as not abusing it, using it out, as the word means, "because the fashion of this world passeth away?"* Can we consent to this decree of GOD, and will what He wills, that the fashion of this world *should* so pass away, pass on as a pageant and show before us, admirable and wonderful indeed as His work, but nothing in itself, not real, not substantial, not abiding, to be gazed at, to be considered, to be studied, but not loved, not regarded by us as if we were part of it. "They are not of the world, for I am not of the world,"† saith CHRIST. Can we then be provident, without being earthly, careful without being anxious, industrious without being covetous, loving without being idolatrous?

And now more particularly with respect to harvest, can we hear it preach to us, not about

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

† S. John xvii. 16.

wages and gain, and this life only, but chiefly about the concerns of our soul, about our eternal interests? Does it give us such serious and devout thoughts as befit faithful men, as are suitable to Christians? Let us see how the Scriptures speak of it, what they make it say to us.

FIRST of all the harvest is a witness to us from our God.

He has indeed so made, and ordered the whole Creation that it should testify of Him and resound His praise. "Every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."* And "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His Eternal power and Godhead."†

To spiritual ears, as the Saviour so often shows us, everything whatsoever, all the greatest, and most mysterious, and all the simplest and least objects in nature, preach to us, and witness to us from our God. The sun, and the moon, and the stars, the courses of the seasons, sunshine and rain, day and night, the clouds and the rivers, the beasts, and the birds, and the trees, and the flowers, the hills and the valleys, the rocks and the stones, and the works also of men's hands, houses, and temples,

* Rev. v. 13.

† Rom. i. 20.

and garments, and ornaments, and wine, and bread, and oil, all have their proper spiritual voice, all take up their parable, all preach to us eloquent sermons. The governments also, and fortunes of nations, war and peace, famine and pestilence, all the changes and chances of the world, fail not to re-echo and confirm the testimony.

In short, every creature and every event, however strange and surprising, or insignificant in appearance, is as it were a note in that vast hymn* of praise, which began, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;"† and which has been pealing ever since louder and mightier throughout creation, like an anthem gushing up the choir and aisles and roof of some vast cathedral, whose tones at times strike awfully on our ears, whose sound soothes the Saints upon their resting beds, whose harmony the angels bathe in, and which we shall hear in all its overwhelming majesty and melody around the Throne of Glory for ever, if we are counted worthy of admission into the Temple.

Among these objects of nature, the Harvest seems especially consecrated by Holy Scripture, to speak to us, and preach to us from the LORD our God. Doth it not year by year take up its many parables? Does it not year by year address to our eyes its forcible and persuasive sermons? Consider how it witnesses to us. It addresses all

* S. Augustine. † Job xxxviii. 7.

mankind. When the new founders of the human race, Noah and his family, came out of the ark, when they looked abroad over the desolate earth, covered with slime and sand, strewn with the corpses and wrecks of the former world, bare and ghastly and treeless, when they called to mind the fearful and sudden, and universal destruction, which had so lately swallowed up all their guilty fellow-creatures, and even the beasts of earth, and fowls of air, because of man's wickedness; how solemn, how appalling must the sight have been. Well might they come forth in terror and with trembling with those dreadful evidences of God's wrath all around them.

And as they stood beside the steaming altar with eyes and hands lifted up in earnest supplication toward the throne of Grace, how must they have been comforted with the merciful assurance that God would not again smite any more everything living as He had done. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

And as often as from henceforth the beautiful rainbow came trembling out in the clouds when the early and the latter rains were falling, how must the hearts of the patriarchs have beaten in deep thankfulness, as they nourished the harvests which should thenceforth support them, and be also a memorial of the promise given them, a witness of God's merciful covenant, a token of His perpetual care.

And when long years afterwards, in the preaching of the Gospel, the Light of salvation was spreading over the world, deluged as it were with idolatry and iniquity ; still S. Paul appeals to the same abiding evidence which ever testified God's power and love to an unbelieving world. " He left not Himself without witness in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."*

And when amidst the increasing flood of idolatry, God chose one peculiar people, to be the treasure-house of His name and love, when He made His covenant with Israel, how were they to know if His favour was upon them ? What was the beginning of His solemn attestations ?—" If thou shalt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field, blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out."†

Thus to all mankind, to the heathen and to the Jew, the harvest was a manifest sign and token of God's care and love and goodness, a memorial of His merciful covenants with them, and a call to obedience and thankfulness, which it was sinful not to notice and understand.

* Acts xiv. 17.

† Deut. xxvii. 1—5.

And because we are Christians, has this witness ceased to testify to us? Is its sermon hushed? Does it no more speak to us of our FATHER's goodness?

He has indeed other witnesses amongst Christians, whose voice is infinitely mightier, and clearer, spiritual witnesses of His spiritual covenant, fit witnesses of that ministration which exceeds in glory, beside whose melody and eloquence all other testimonies are, as it were, confounded and dumb. "For even that which was made glorious hath no glory in this respect, by reason of that glory which excelleth."

"The only begotten and beloved SON, Incarnate in the flesh, JESUS CHRIST;"* the first begotten from the dead, and Prince of the kings of the earth, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto GOD and His FATHER, in "whom all the promises of GOD are yea, and Amen;" He is the faithful Witness, Himself the "Amen, the faithful and true witness."† His incarnation, His birth, His human nature, His cradle, His circumcision, His flight, His return, His obedience to Joseph and Mary, His baptism, His fasting, His temptation, His ministry, His miracles, His parables, His patience, His tenderness toward sinners, His reception of penitents, His weariness, His tears, His agony and bloody sweat, His insults, shame, spitting, and

* Rev. i. 5.

† Rev. iii. 14.

scourging, the accusations heaped on Him, His condemnation amidst criminals, the cruel lash, the tearing thorns, the rending nails, the Cross, the burning thirst, the title, the words, the precious salvation of the thief, the care for His Virgin Mother, the darkness, and the earthquake, the desolation of soul, the cry of utter dereliction, the faith of the last words, the pierced side, the blood and the water, the burial and the grave, the Resurrection and Ascension—these are our testimonies of our FATHER'S love and care.

And again, in the long array of prophets who as lower and subordinate witnesses, heralded the approach of the One Great Witness, in John the Baptist His forerunner, in the holy company of Apostles, the noble army of Martyrs, in the long line of Bishops and other sacred ministers, in the preservation of the Church, in the gradual unrolling of the book of prophecy, in the power of Holy Sacraments, in the patience of saints, the purity of Virgins, the tears of penitents, in the continual groanings of devout intercession, in weak youths, and tender maidens, and feeble elders, trampling mightily and cheerfully upon pain and death, and in the still small voice, whispering in the inmost heart, rebukes, encouragements, and consolations, to whose power the torrent or the whirlwind are as nothing, to whose sweetness and comfort the heavenliest music is discord—in all these the Eternal Spirit is the Witness of our God. He continues the testimony of JESUS, for He tes-

tifieth of Him.—“The Spirit beareth witness, because the Spirit is Truth.”

But because we have such unutterably glorious and great witnesses, the lesser and lower witnesses have not been done away ; the record and testimony of the creatures has not ceased. The beautiful discoursings of the many-voiced universe have not been silenced, because the voice of JESUS' blood, and the gracious comforting Spirit, have so infinitely overpassed their pleasantness and melody. Rather the objects of the world around us, are now sanctified and consecrated to a higher meaning. The parables of nature are now more forcible and eloquent. Since heaven gates have been opened by our risen Saviour's entrance, a flood of spiritual glory has streamed down thence, over this lower and material world, illuminating it with colours and a radiance which it had not before, and turning its various objects into fair shadows and types of the everlasting truths within the veil. In the voices of the woods, and the streams, and the waving fields, angel tongues seem now to discourse to us, speaking to us by them of those great and glorious revelations of God's goodness, wisdom and love, which feed the eyes, and enrapture the hearts of those blessed Spirits above.

Is it not so especially with the harvest ? The eyes and the lips of angels, of those who shall judge angels, and of Him whom the angels worship, have seen in it, and drawn out from it, warnings and lessons of the highest importance, symbols and

signs of those great workings of God's glorious providence, by which He orders all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, and conducts His whole creation visible and invisible towards its appointed and expected end.

If we think over the Scriptures, how many passages rush upon us, in which the heavenly sermon of the harvest is thus set before us, in which its witness is enforced upon us. They are so many, and the instructions drawn from them so various, and sometimes there is such an interchange of images, that to enumerate them all, and heap one upon another, would be too long, and produce indistinctness and confusion.

We observe, however, in the typical application of the harvest, and its objects, a threefold rule of interpretation given us, which will enable us to see at once the purport and force of the particular parable, and to infer from the object which we look upon, the truth which we should put to heart.

Sometimes the Bible regards us as the objects of God's work, sometimes as ourselves called upon to work, sometimes as on our trial for the judgment. In the first case it views us as the ground; in the next as the labourers; in the last as the harvest itself. If in each parable of, or allusion to, the harvest, we consider and note how we are to regard ourselves in it, as the objects in which God works, as influencing or working upon others, or as upon our trial and to be judged, we shall see why we are here the ground or field, there the labourers

or workmen, there the produce of that ground, and result of that work, that is the harvest. And so we shall find no difficulty in perceiving what the doctrine is which we were intended to learn, and which what we hear should forcibly impress upon us.

And whichever way we view ourselves, how solemn and heart-searching are the voices of the harvest! Let us consider its first voice, when we are regarded as the ground of God.

HAS earth been as it were one harvest field? Have we watched what the various lands and soils produce? Has there been care and culture here, negligence and mistakes there? Do the different soils and their various degrees of cultivation return a different increase? Are men saying, "My ground has repaid me so many bushels, or so many quarters to the acre," and for the most part according to the care and expense which has been bestowed upon it?

Hearst thou not, Christian soul, how the harvest first speaks to thee, how the voice goes sounding on over hill, and over valley, in its echoing sermon?

Yes, the world is a field indeed, but it is the field of God; and the ground is mysterious and wonderful, deep, oh how deep!—precious, how precious! For the ground is the heart of mankind; and that ground goes deepening on into eternity and infinity; an eternity and infinity of misery or of joy. And that ground was purchased by its Owner, at no less a cost than His own blood. And behold in that field the Owner is going up and down continually, as the labourer sowing. And His bosom is full of seed, full of all the treasures of wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, full with infinite inexhaustible abundance, "for

in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

And the seed is the Word. And at least among ourselves, with both His hands, so to speak, He takes the riches of that word out of His overflowing bosom, and pours it everywhere in its appointed measure. And as He pours it into the furrow, He makes His sun to shine on it, even "the knowledge of the glory of God in His own face," and He waters it with His own blood, and rains upon it the grace of His most Holy Spirit.

And sowing, and shining, and raining grace, He passes over the whole field, up and down, and to and fro, with exactest care and diligence. "What can He do more for it, which He has not done?" What increase then does it render to Him? What harvest does He reap from it?

For behind Him, if we may say so, following Him as His shadow, moves a hideous form of darkness, even Satan the enemy, and he stretches out his hands to snatch away, if he is permitted, the seed as it is falling, or to intercept with cold dark clouds the bright beams of the Sower's face, or turn aside the rich "showers of blessings" which descend in His streaming blood. And if he can thus turn any of the ground into waste and barren patches, he sows them with thorns and briars of iniquity and death, which indeed spring hastily and naturally out of the corrupt soil of men's hearts.

Think first then of thine own soul—that is nearer to thee than aught else. What kind of

ground does it present to the Heavenly Sower? How does it receive the seed which He sows? Is it nourished there by His love and grace? Does it give Him His fruit in due season?

There are many kinds of ground in many states of cultivation, many kinds of heart in many different states of spiritual life. There is, our LORD tells us, the wayside ground, bare, hard, dry, a public road open to every traveller, trodden by the feet of man and beast, beaten by the horsehoofs, and pressed by the chariot wheels of Satan and his armies. This is the careless profane heart, forgetful of its birthright, unconcerned altogether about spiritual matters, open to all tempters and temptations, where evil thoughts enter and unclean spirits go in and out as they will. Into this heart the seed never penetrates. It falls upon it, but it cannot stir it. For it is fixed to reject it. The Word lies upon it as seed on the hard road, blown to and fro or trodden under foot, until snatched away by the fowls of the air. This heart often has knowledge, mere head knowledge as we call it. But it will not understand that the Word is meant to influence our conduct, overrule our life. The warnings of the Gospel do not arouse it, the threatenings do not alarm it, the invitations do not draw it, the promises do not comfort it, the mercies held out do not rejoice it.

It reads the Word, or hearkens to the Word, as a mere book of information, or at most as the "song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." It therefore has no

fruit, no wheat, scarcely any blossom or bud or promise of fruit to show to the Sower when He reviews His field.

Then there is the stony ground, a little earth laid over a great hard rock. When the seed falls there, the ground receives it. All looks well. The sun shines on it, the rains water it. It springs up fast, first the blade, then the ear. It puts forth buds, it shows perhaps blossoms.

But the sun shines hot, and bright, and scorching. It would ripen marvellously the deep rooted wheat. But on the rock there is no root. The surface earth dries up. The moisture exhales. The plant droops before the grain forms. It withers away as rapidly as it grew. It has never made any fruit. It has leaves, perhaps abundance of leaves, a tall stalk, a large-looking ear, or spike, or bell, but there is nothing in it.

This is the unsteady and dishonest heart, moved and stirred by its feelings, not by faith. It hears the word. The word enters into it, moves it vehemently. Up shoots the blade, the stalk, the ear, the whole promise of salvation, wondrous appearances of conversion all as it were together, and in a moment. Grace seems to nourish it, love to warm and cherish it. It is full of itself, of its own enthusiasm, its own eagerness and earnestness, its own purposes and promises of faithfulness and obedience, devotion and charity, of mighty deeds to be done, and many labours to be endured by and bye in the LORD'S service. But it shrinks from the

actual cross. It "despises the day of little things." It does not in real immediate obedience to the word practise the great duty of self-denial, and take up courageously a regular and holy way and rule of life, and so give itself up to JESUS and Him crucified. It fears man's rebuke, desires man's praise.

Then the sun grows hot. The trial begins—temptations come. It has no fixed rule of living, no plain way to follow. It is astonished and amazed when all is not so easy as it expected. It becomes uncertain, then irregular—then perhaps fearful, then scared at its own fearfulness. It grows weak and helpless as the temptation gains strength. Now its first promises and purposes rise up in judgment against it. And it stood in its own might: its support was its feelings, its bright day dreams, its romantic imaginings. It has meanwhile done nothing—realized nothing. And the sun is burning, the trial waxing serious.

There are means of grace,—there are glorious promises—there are Gospel truths, line upon line, precept upon precept. It thinks of these, turns to them perhaps. But it has no root. It has no faith to receive nourishment in Sacraments, to cleave to the assurances of help and deliverance, to guide itself by the plain commandments and counsels, to live upon the holy doctrines, which once charmed it. Its very past promises, and endeavours, and beginnings make the burden heavier. CHRIST's yoke waxes grievous to it. It breaks its vows and pledges to its God; and at every breach

grace streams away, and there is none coming in. Its great show of godliness or conversion becomes too much for it. It cannot act up to it. Its natural warmth and hopefulness make it unsteady, and liable to sudden impulses of evil. Its disappointments are felt more deeply. Temptation comes in like a flood. Sin lays fast hold of it. Grace departs. Its life diminishes. Its head, "the hope of salvation," droops; its leaves even, its promises and resolutions of righteousness, grow pale and yellow, and fade away; the stalk, its very faith, snaps—it sinks into despair, or takes shelter in hypocrisy—and there is no grain, no fruit, no works of righteousness, no evidences and tokens of the Spirit's life. And through its broken stalk, through its blighted faith, except by a miracle of mercy, that life can no longer re-enter it. The LORD of the harvest comes—there is nothing for Him to reap.

Then there is the ground in which weeds or thorns spring up with the seed and choke it, so that it becomes unfruitful, brings no fruit to perfection. This is the heart which gradually becomes worldly. It has perhaps a fair promise at first, as the unsteady and unfaithful heart, or even yet fairer. For its promises and purposes of devotion and charity, not only make a goodly show, but form themselves into some fruit of actual obedience and benevolence. But it is not all CHRIST'S. It does not really wish to be so. The world has some part in it. And wherever the world has a part, there are "roots of bitterness" ready to spring up into weeds and

thorns, into earthly cares and delights. And these seem to come up in the divided heart certainly, gradually, naturally. The heart does not notice their growth. Each pleasure of the world sows itself again, each care generates another care. The love of earth's delights grows, as we taste them. The cares of earth strengthen, as we indulge them. They do not seem at first to interfere with our religion or devotion. They do not occasion any sudden change of life. They do not force us to give up our hopes of salvation : they do not appear to make us presumptuous or self-confident. But they eat away the heart from our obedience and faith. They take away the love of our souls and fasten it to the world. They gradually chill our fervour, and make us lukewarm and indifferent about the glory of CHRIST JESUS, the spread of His Church, the welfare of His little ones. They make us unwilling to offend the world, to differ from the common opinions of men. They make us unwilling to give up success here, in order to secure success hereafter. They keep us in ways of life which we suspect, but are not sure, may be very dangerous to our souls. They prevent us from giving up friends and connexions which are profitable or agreeable in the world, but which are surely snares to us in our pathway towards salvation. They make us timid in confessing CHRIST JESUS before men, in avowing our love for Him, in boldly carrying His Cross. They make us weakly indulgent towards false doctrine, heresy, and schism, towards

covetousness, and wickedness, and uncleanness, so far as they are not condemned by the world. They make us limit our devotions, alms, and self-denials, to those narrow boundaries which the world approves of. They make us jealous of those holier and better than ourselves. They make us slight or even revile, the continual prayers, the willing poverty, the virgin life, the widow's mite, commended so highly in the Holy Bible, because they run contrary to present human traditions. They make us take mere kindness for charity, mere decency for godliness, mere acknowledgment of the truth for a living faith, the mere forsaking gross sins for deep Christian repentance, mere friendship for the Church for true obedience to it, mere reverence for CHRIST'S Name, for the self-sacrificing love of JESUS.

And thus the worldly heart brings no fruit to perfection. Those cares and affections choke the word in it. It ripens not the grain. It is still green, still fearful and backsliding, still doubtful and lukewarm, often unhappy at its own shortcomings, often purposing more complete self-surrender to the LORD. At times perhaps even groaning and sighing over its own weakness, but still putting off, still delaying the accomplishment of its purpose, the confession of its sins, the attendance at Holy Sacraments, the earnest abundant prayerfulness, the preparation for CHRIST'S coming, the devotion to His service. And so in the midst of all the means of grace, and the "knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST," it still

remains unripe, green, blighted, and imperfect. It only seeks, it does not strive, to enter in at the strait gate. It cannot do that holy violence to itself, and to the LORD, by which it may break through the wall of its own carefulness, and force its way into the kingdom of heaven. Again and again it is warned, called, invited, shone upon, but it continues green, and unripe. And when the Sower comes as the Reaper, it is still green, still unripe, still unprofitable, still not quite ready. The LORD of harvest comes. It has no fruit for Him.

“Love is strong as death, jealousy deep as the grave.” As CHRIST loves us, so will He have us love Him. “We must be faithful unto death, that He may give us the crown of life.” The only fruit which He will accept and offer to the FATHER, is that which is altogether His.

And what shall we say of yet wilder, and rougher ground, of that land which is utterly desolate and waste, the abode of evil beasts, the haunt of unclean spirits, laying snares and temptations in the way of others, busy about Satan’s own work; of that land which having long borne “thorns and briars is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;” of that land which in the midst of all means of grace, and hopes of glory, lightened with the Sun of Righteousness, tilled by God’s ministers, sown with the seed of the Word by JESUS Himself, still gives nothing but nettles and brambles, and multiplying scandals; still turns all the nourishment of eternal life into consuming

poison, whose words and life eat like a canker into the Church, "the streams whereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone; and the land thereof shall become burning pitch?"* Is there such ground in the Church of God, hearts so hard, teachers or ministers so dangerous, hearts overgrown thus with hypocrisy or open unbelief, with fornication, uncleanness, or drunkenness, or malice, and envy, and covetousness, with names of dreadful blasphemy, and abominable idolatry and sin? If the ground is such, what must be its produce; when the Sower comes to reap, when the harvest time arrives, what will be the end, what the recompense of such hearts? "If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

But here and there throughout the whole field, there is other kind of ground. The spots, indeed, may be comparatively rare, and hard to be discerned, for the "wicked doth compass about the righteous," and man's nature is corrupt, and "the whole world lieth in wickedness." In Israel during Ahab's reign, even to a Prophet's eye, no such spot appeared. All was waste and desolate, and seemed burning with wickedness like the plain of Sodom and Gomorrah. But there were to the Eye of God seven thousand spots of fair and holy ground there, rendering to Him in the midst of that wild waste a good increase, and rich harvest.

* Isaiah xxxiv. 9.

How much more are such to be found in the Church of God now "which He purchased with His own blood."

There is good ground everywhere, though it be scattered up and down, though it be hidden beneath the multitude of the ungodly, yet there is no country, no city, no village, where some fruitful spots are not to be found. And wheresoever there is one, though it be but a narrow plot, yet there the seed is falling fast, there the Sun of Righteousness is shining, and "showers of blessings" raining, there is the kingdom of heaven shooting forth, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear;" there is the Sower become the Reaper also, gathering one harvest, as it ripens, and sowing another while He gathers it.

This is the "honest and good heart," which keeps the word when it is sown in it, which readily hearkens to its directions and counsels, which meditates upon them, like David, day and night, which "makes haste and prolongs not the time to keep God's commandments," which patiently wrestles with every doubt and difficulty, patiently overcomes every temptation, patiently bears every trial and affliction, every reproach and shame in its LORD's service, patiently labours to secure its salvation, patiently brings forth works meet for repentance, patiently takes up its cross every day, and so bears fruit, all the blessed fruits of the Spirit in their season. Yes, the heart of the righteous is like a watered garden, or "like a field

which the LORD hath blessed." All things serve it, and "work together for its good," heaven, earth, even hell, contribute to its fruitfulness, heaven by its abundant grace, earth by its opportunities of loving and doing good, hell by the fiery trials which it is permitted to heap upon the saints, but which only humble the true heart, and stir it, and make it contrite for the reception of more seed, more grace, and for the more plenteous entrance of the warm rays of charity and love.

And thus it makes haste to bear what fruit it can, to return as speedily as possible a due harvest to its LORD: and then because it gives these early first fruits to Him, His "heavenly FATHER purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

For the righteous and the penitent heart is like the richer soil of tropical climates, where the former and the latter rain descend in regular succession, and the glowing sun performs its fostering office with the full glory of its strong beams, where the spring "rain of bounty" showers down like preventing grace, and the larger autumn "rain of the Covenant," like assisting and increasing grace; "where by the careful husbandman, (and what husbandman is so careful as our heavenly FATHER?) two crops are every year garnered in, without the land being impoverished; and whilst the corn is being reaped in one field, the seed is but just sown in another. The cattle are employed in ploughing up the fertile soil of one estate, whilst in the next the muzzled ox is trampling out its recently yielded

treasures, and all the various operations of husbandry, from the breaking up the ground, to the final winnowing of the corn, may be simultaneously witnessed on one and the same farm.”*

Yet all good ground is not equal in quality, neither has it all the same amount of care bestowed on it. Some produces less, some more, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some a hundred fold.

And so honest and good hearts abounding in the grace; and warm with the love of the LORD, all indeed bear fruits of the Spirit, yea all bear much fruit, at least, it seems, thirty-fold, else “are they not CHRIST’S disciples.” Nevertheless, one heart abounds above another; one renders to its LORD that thirty-fold, the more usual and common obedience; another sixty-fold, higher degrees of faith and self-devotion; another a hundred-fold, the saintly life which converts many to righteousness, accepts all the counsels of Holy Scripture, and chooses the “good part” of Mary.

Do we look then at the harvest? Do we judge, in a general way, from its appearance and quantity, the quality of the ground on which it grows, and the amount of labour which has been bestowed on it? Shall we not then also hear its voice? Has it not a solemn question to ask us? From hill and from valley, from waste and from wilderness, from the thorny and weedy ground, from the rich waving fields, bowing and overwhelmed with their abund-

* Harris’s Ethiopia, vol. iii. p. 270.

ance, does not the still small voice swell up, and say, What is the harvest which thou renderest unto JESUS? What is thy heart? What does it bear? "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

Ah! day by day, month by month, year by year, He comes to oversee His field, He comes to view His ground, He comes to reap His crops of righteousness, and "mercy." He comes to gather and store away His harvests. His hands sowed the seed: His blood watered it; His face has shined on it. And now the same hands are stretched out to receive its fruits, the same blood will sprinkle and cleanse them, the glory of that countenance illuminate them. And heaven above is the garner. There are His barns, there are His treasure houses.

If thou hast the honest and good heart, if thou art all His, then not one grain of wheat, not one deed, word, thought, according to His heavenly FATHER's will; not one faithful prayer, not one penitent sigh, not one contrite tear, not one cup of cold water given to a disciple for CHRIST's sake, not one self-denial practised for His honour, not one mastery of thy temper, not one gentle answer to rough words, not one meek bowing of the head under the afflicting hand of God, not one hymn or thank-offering for mercies vouchsafed, not one warning given to a sinner, nor one consolation to a mourner, will be lost.

He will ever gather the continual, increasing, ripening harvest, which thou thus ever offerest to Him. He will return it to thee now in more

abundant showers of grace, and deeper, and broader, and brighter love shed abroad in thy heart, perhaps with temptations and persecutions for His sake. He will also store it all away for thee in heaven, to return it to thee in the day of retribution "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, given into thy bosom," heavenly for earthly, eternal for temporal. For what CHRIST reaps from thee now, thou sowest, sowest into heaven, into the deep rich ground of eternity. And what thou sowest, that shalt thou reap. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Shouldst thou not therefore search and try thy ways? shouldst thou not regularly examine thyself? Shouldst thou not study by all means, by prayer, by meditation, by holy counsels of good friends, the state and condition of thy heart? Shouldst thou not in the same way study the will of God, that with a holy and noble ambition, thou mayst strive for a large heart, a heart enlarged by His free, princely Spirit, a heart aiming (if it may be so) at the hundred-fold produce, a heart bent on turning every power of mind and body, and every year, and month, and day, and hour, to the increase of its heavenly store? "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth, and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My word be

that goeth forth out of My mouth. It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

“Open thy mouth wide, saith God, and I will fill it.”†

But what if thy heart is barren, waste and fruitless, if week by week, and year by year the Sower draws nigh as the Reaper or the Winnow, the sickle and the fan in His hands to reap the wheat, and purge it, and gather it, and scatter away the chaff, and still finds nothing on His ground, that is thy soul, purchased by His death, regenerate in His Spirit, marked with His blood? What if He visits thee in light and in darkness, in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in hope and in disappointment, and still finds nothing? What if He perceives that His word is still buried in thy forgetful careless heart, like the talent of the unprofitable servant?

Will He then own thy heart as His ground, will He bless it, will He strengthen it with the living waters of His Spirit, and make His face to shine on it, will He deign to cultivate it, will He remove its stone? Shall it be, that you must join in that outcry, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?”‡

Ah, who can tell, or imagine, the anguish and agony of that cry? Were you ever disappointed, unexpectedly disappointed of some great pleasure,

* Isa. lv. 10.

† Ps. lxxxi. 10.

‡ Jer. viii. 20.

some deep gladness which you had promised yourself, of some large fortune which was to enrich you for life, of some person's love which was the "Light of your eyes," which you prized more than your own soul? Was it heartrending? Did you cry out bitterly when you learned your loss and found it might not be repaired? Was not the agony worse, if your misery was your own work, caused by your own misconduct or neglect? Yet what is the worst earthly disappointment, and horror, to the bitterness of that discovery, we are not saved and cannot be saved? The time is over—the harvest past—the summer finished—the day of grace gone by. The soul that might have been saved is condemned, and reprobate for ever. And now time is no more, self-deceit is no more, forgetfulness is no more; nothing but an eternity of disappointment, remorse, torments, darkness, despair, the worm that dieth not, the fire which is not quenched.

Be not thou unprofitable any longer. The harvest is nearly finished. For near six thousand years, if it be not more, has GOD been sowing and reaping among men. And the LORD is at hand, the time draws on. Already the days dwindle. Already, perhaps, there are "grey hairs here and there upon thee, and thou knowest it not."* "The day goeth away, for the shadows of evening are stretched out."† Shall men be so busy in harvest, who have but a year's food at stake, and who may expect

* Hos. vii. 9.

† Jer. vi. 4.

many summers, and many harvests more? And shall we who have but one harvest, and one summer for our souls, still lie with folded hands, and drowsy eyes, idly watching the Saints beside us, abounding in all good works, and ourselves doing nothing, bearing nothing, no grain, no wheat for JESUS our Redeemer! How much longer will it be before God finishes His harvest? How much longer before thy summer is for ever over?

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy: Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till He come, and rain righteousness upon us.”*

If, however, thy heart is not only waste and fruitless, but abounding in evil, fruitful in iniquity, if when the great Steward of the Husbandman comes year after year to His labourers, seeking for His wheat, thou hast for Him a harvest of provocations and abominations; if unclean spirits, like the avenging armies, have entered into thy soul, and “eaten up every green thing there, eaten up thy harvest and thy bread,” and made a “famine of the Word of God there;” if thy soul is overgrown with thorns and briars of evil habits, hard and dry, and like a flint against all good; is not such a ground “rejected, and nigh unto cursing?” JESUS cursed the barren fig tree; and immediately it withered away. There was no more hope, no more recovery for it.

* Hosea x. 12.

And can we bear to remain near the curse of God, close to it already, and drawing nearer and nearer to it every hour? If it once falls there is no more hope, "no place of repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears." The ground on which it once lights is blasted, withered for ever, "whose end is to be burned." "Who can dwell with the devouring fire, who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Is it not time for thee to be as a "brand plucked out of the fire?" What must thou do? There is One who can break the strongest stone, who can make soft the hardest clods, who can find the Seed of Life once sown, and now lost in the heart, even when it appears perished and dead for ever. He can make His blood stream over it, His grace water it, and the light of His Face revive it, His absolutions and Sacraments nourish it, even when its life seems utterly departed. He can bring out with rapid, mighty, converting love, His blessed kingdom in the withered spirit; "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." He can ripen it, oh how speedily, for the harvest. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our GOD."

Thus came life back to David, sinking in agony

under the conviction of his sinfulness in the convicting prophet's voice—"The LORD also hath taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Thus came it again to the idolatrous and bloody Manasseh, in his dark captivity and biting fetters in Babylon, when repenting and praying, "the LORD brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom."* Thus came it to Mary Magdalene at the Saviour's feet, if it indeed be she, as she heard the LORD's words to proud Simon, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loveth much;" and to herself, "Go in peace." Thus came it to S. Peter, after the threefold denial in the hall of Caiaphas, from the eyes of the LORD, as He turned and looked on His disciple. Thus came it to S. Paul, from the fiery blaze striking him down to the dust; "Arise and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Thus came it to the Penitent Thief upon the Cross, in his last death agony. "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Thus came it even to the woman taken in adultery—"Neither do I condemn thee—go and sin no more."

But if thou hast been so diligent in "sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind," if thou hast abounded unto sin and Satan, if thou hast covered thy soul with so many thorns and briars, so many iniquities and impurities, if thou hast made thy heart so hard and stony, by repeated transgres-

* 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.

sions, by sin heaped on sin, and "drawn as it were with a cartrope;" if thou hast had such a harvest of sinful pleasures, whose memory is now death to thee; must thou not now proportionably abound in all the fruits of repentance? must not thy diligence in the LORD's service now answer to thy past industry in Satan's hard bondage? Must not thy present fervour of holy love outvie thy past heat of sinful lust and luxury? Must thou not, if penitent like Manasseh, humble thyself like Manasseh? must thou not, if changed like Mary, love like Mary? if converted like Peter, weep like Peter? if like Paul, labour like Paul? if like the adulterous woman, sin no more? if like David, endure shame, confess, weep, pray, fast if thou mayest, abound in alms and mercies, and long-suffering, like that great pattern of penitence, till thou canst make, as it were, his penitential psalms thine own, till they become in thy lips, as in his, the voice of the Holy Spirit within thee making intercession for thee, with groanings unutterable?

Look we up then to heaven, and say, O sweet blessed harvest of holy penitence, may my heart render thee faithfully to my so gracious Saviour. As I have abounded unto my enemy, may I abound unto Thee, O LORD, my only and all-sufficient Friend! What is mine heart, O LORD, that Thou shouldst thus break it up, thus bruise its dry clods, thus plough it with long furrows of affliction, thus water it with my own tears, thus sow it again with Thy word, thus cleanse it with

Thy blood, thus bedew it with Thy grace, thus warm it with Thy love, bless it with Thy fruits ?

“LORD, what is man that Thou art so mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou so regardest him ?”

Such then is the first voice of Harvest when we view ourselves as the ground on which God works.

BUT secondly, the harvest addresses us also as God's workmen. "Come stand," it says, "in spirit with the Saviour by the well at Sychar." Hear how He bids His disciples lift up their eyes, and look on the fields, and see them white already to harvest.* Or watch Him before He sends forth His twelve Apostles, gazing with tender pitiful eyes upon the multitude fainting, and scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. And hearken to His gracious commandment to His disciples: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."† Hearken to Him repeating the same earnest exhortation, before He sent out by two and two His seventy disciples also. Still He says unto them, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest."‡

O Saviour! Thou wert the first missionary of Salvation. For a missionary is one sent. And Thou wert sent unto us from the FATHER, out of the heaven of heavens, out of the infinite Majesty and brightness, out of the "Light which no one hath

* S. John iv. 35. † S. Matt. ix. 37. ‡ S. Luke x. 12.

approached to," out of the bosom of everlasting bliss, laying by all Thy dignity, emptying Thyself of the insufferable glory, narrowing Thyself into our flesh and blood, taking upon Thee the form of a servant, labouring and toiling day and night, spent, and weary, and faint, stretching out Thy arms upon the rending cross, mocked, insulted, laughed at, bowing Thy head in the consummation of the sacrifice, Thou didst by word and life, and prayer, preach Thy Holy Gospel; Thou didst work the work which Thy FATHER gave Thee to do, the work which no creature in heaven, in earth, or under the earth, could accomplish. Thou wentest ever toiling on till Thy sweat was as it were great drops of blood, rolling down to the ground in the great agony of Thy Mission's work. Thou laidest down Thy life to fulfil it, and wert wholly turned into death, yea, made our sin and crucified as our curse, putting by the stupifying draught, amidst Thy death pangs, that not one jot or tittle of the Scripture prophecies, not one point of Thy ordained obedience might in any way be wanting, that Thy harvest labour might be finished within the appointed time, and then be sown as the seed of Thy Church for evermore, watered abundantly with Thy precious blood. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work."

And then in Thy life, and still more after death, Thy Apostles were Thy missionaries, as were the seventy disciples under them. Had not they all

seen with what compassionate eyes thou wert wont to look out over the field in which Thou labouredst? Had they not drunk in Thy Spirit from Thy look? Did it not possess them with the same love, the same yearning passionate desire for the continuance and furtherance of Thy missionary work, begun in Thy own incarnation and death? Had they not all learned from Thee the value which Thou settest on the souls of men? Had they not all heard Thy solemn announcement, "The Harvest is great, the labourers are few?" Thy gracious commandment to pray for their increase? Thy comforting title, the LORD of the Harvest? Thy encouraging assurance "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together?" Thy earnest exhortation, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature?" "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.—Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded. And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Gather we then now the harvest's second voice.

Lift up thine eyes, CHRIST says by it, Lift them up above the cares and business, the hollow empty shows of this vain world, above the eating and drinking, the buying and selling, the marrying and giving in marriage, the plotting and the scheming,

and the studying, the laughing and the playing, the reaping and the harvesting. Lift them up into the clear bright sunlight of eternity, up toward the height from which I view the world.

Lift them up from the inattention and vanity, from the things of earth on which most eyes are fixed. Lift up thine eyes, and see a great sight. See there before thee, what thou thoughtest not of; a Harvest of which the SON of GOD is the LORD, of which the world is the field; immortal souls the growth; GOD's angels and servants the labourers, the reapers, and the threshers; heaven and hell the everlasting garnerers.

It is more than eighteen hundred years since CHRIST sent out His first missionaries, and bade them pray for the increase of their number. And is the field still large, the harvest still great and plenteous, the labourers still few?

"O LORD," let us say, "I lift up mine eyes as Thou dost bid me, I strive to look forth in the light of Thy most glorious Gospel. And what is the sight which I behold?"

I see a world peopled at present with near nine hundred millions of souls—souls like my own. Only two hundred and fifty of those millions are as yet, even outwardly, gathered into Thy faith, make even any profession of Christianity. Near three fourths of those many souls are altogether out of the pale of salvation, wrapped in heathen ignorance, sealed under unbelief, "having no hope and without GOD in the world," lingering out their few

days of life amid shows, and painted shadows, and illusions of the evil one, and then plunging by thousands daily into a dark eternity, without hope. Yet, every one of those souls was created in Thy image, is made capable of eternal happiness or misery; if not an heir of heaven, must be a child of hell. Four or five hundred thousand of such souls are thus passing out of the world every week. And where are the labourers? Where are the workmen? Where are the missionaries? One or two here, one or two there, a few hundreds at the very most. In many large countries, for example in China, with its three hundred millions of people, as it were none.

I lift up my eyes again. I look somewhat nearer and higher into Thy ransomed Church; or at least over the nations which in name are Thine.—What see I there?

What division and dissension, what jarring parties, what open unbelief, what secret infidelity, what worldliness and covetousness, what fornication and uncleanness, how many spiritual idols—foul, fearful, and hideous to look upon, yet tricked out perhaps with all the arts of men's wisdom, beautiful and bright with ruinous fascinations, praised, applauded, sung by their countless worshippers.

Does not God's true temple, even His Christian Church, present us almost with a spectacle, such as the vision of jealousy which Ezekiel beheld in the old Jewish temple, forms of creeping things, and images and idols of all kinds, new and dark abomi-

nations in chamber after chamber, and the high and the low, the great man and the wise man, the priest and the people, bowing down before them amidst the steaming incense of their worldliness, till the eye is almost blinded, and the heart crushed by contemplating them?

And all the souls gathered into the field of God, where the name of CHRIST is known, and His Gospel heard, have not only been created, but new created in CHRIST's image, and received in their baptisms double, yea, it may be a thousand fold, as great capacities of joy or misery for eternity. And all need cure, all need cultivation, all need schools, and churches, and ministers, and sacraments. Is there not much (oh how much!) to be done before the whole temple of the world is lightened with CHRIST's face, before His prayer is fulfilled, "that we all may be One," before the "earth is full of the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea," before "Jerusalem is builded up as a city that is compact together," "and the throne of David exalted" in the tops of the mountains, before the Zion of God's Church becomes the praise and "joy of the whole earth." And who is seeking and working, and striving, and praying in love and tears, for this peace and unity, and sanctification of God's Church? "The harvest truly is plenteous, the labourers are few."

Look nearer still, to thy own country, to the great British Empire, of which thou art a citizen. What seest thou there? Thou seest vast colonies,

future nations issuing from the loins of our own country, hundreds of thousands now every year settling in islands, spreading over continents. There a house becomes a village, a village a town, towns multiply into thronged luxurious and commercial cities before children are grown into men. Well nigh every city and village amongst ourselves sends forth some of its offspring to relieve our own superabundant and fast increasing population. We send out also our criminals, between three and four thousand every year, who in time will most of them become settlers and citizens, and parents of families, and who surely need double cultivation and attention, if they are to be reclaimed and restored to Christianity and Salvation.

We bring also under our dominion in these territories thousands and millions of natives, one hundred and fifty millions in India alone, some as in that great country civilized, some altogether uncivilized, in every stage of cultivation, as it were, from the Brahmin or the Moollah down to the barbarism of Australia or Africa. We take their country in charge, or in possession. Can we be exempt then from the charge of their souls? This also is a great field. The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

Look nearer still, into our own country, our own cities, our own villages. How many fearful sights, how many sad wild wastes, meet the searching, thoughtful, spiritual eye, when it strives to look forth with Jesus, over this our rich,

our civilized, our Christian land! How much ignorance is there of the way of salvation, even of the simplest truths, even of the Being of God in many places, how many awful and crowded dens of heart-rending misery and abominable iniquity close by our sparkling shops, our luxurious palaces! How many souls numbered, it is dreadful to say it, by hundreds of thousands, who grow up in complete unbelief, who know not the name of the Saviour, except perhaps as an oath and name of blasphemy! No houses of God for them to worship in, no schools to educate them, no ministers to warn them, no priests to bless them. How active are Satan and his emissaries among them, how hideous the doctrines which they disperse through their darkness. How fearful in particular are the accounts of juvenile depravity, how terrible is the number of unholy, impious, demoralizing books and newspapers, and other publications, it is said forty millions annually,* four times as many as all religious publications and tracts, circulated with horrible and devilish industry among them. How much is crime on the increase, especially among the younger portions of society, who should, O LORD! be Thy little ones, and in Thy arms, and underneath Thy blessing. "The labourers are few."

Look once more into the very neighbourhood in which thou livest. What seest thou there?

Are there not sinners to be warned there,

* See Mr. Worsley's Prize Essay on Juv. Depravity.

children of ignorance to be instructed there, faint-hearted Christians to be encouraged, mourners to be comforted, sick people to be visited, poor to be fed or clothed, and schools wanting help there?

Look into thy own house, round thy own table ; seest thou not friends who may be guided into the way of godliness, servants, relations, brethren, children who may be influenced by thee for good ? Every one whom thou meetest, the little babe in its mother's arms, has a soul planted in the field of God, has a life in it which must last when the sun is gone out in the sky, when this earth and this heaven, and time itself are no more. And any one who sees thee, or to whom thou speakest, may be influenced by thee in that his endless destiny.

Is not the field large then ? is not the harvest plenteous ? and where are the labourers ?

Is it not our duty, should it not be our delight even with tears of tenderness and joy, to perform each of us his appointed missionary work ? Abroad and at home, in foreign countries, and our own, should we not, if it be possible, labour in it day and night ?

Those hundreds of millions of heathen, do they not call aloud for the converting Gospel ? Those emigrants and colonists whom we discharge hence for our own welfare—should we not provide that they may not lose those spiritual blessings which they leave behind them ? Should we not cradle those infant nations in the arms of the holy Saviour, and win His blessing on their future progress ? Those criminals whom we cast forth as

plagues from amongst ourselves, should they not find instructors, messengers of mercy, ministers of conversion and holy discipline ready to receive them, warn them, guide them, comfort them, not merely to preach to them, but speak to their hearts, bring them to repentance, keep them in its way, that they may not taint the atmosphere which they breathe, spread their contagious sins round about them, and corrupt the growing nations amongst whom their lot is cast ?

Those poor heathens, either brought under our sway, or whose land we occupy, who too often have in time past learned little but new sins and impurities from our intercourse with them, who too often fade away like withering wild flowers, or melancholy dreams, before our extending population—do they not cry out for pity, for the Gospel, for the Saviour, for some little recompense at least of spiritual blessings at our hands ?

Ought we not to pierce speedily into the dark abodes of misery and guilt in our country, or in our great cities ? Ought we not to try and gather the outcasts of Israel, the lost ones of the Church of God ? Ought we not from tares, from children of the Evil One, to turn them into wheat, into the planting of CHRIST JESUS ? Are not His garners open, His mercies ready ? What is there wanting except labourers, houses of GOD, earnest ministers, holy schoolmasters, who are as it were CHRIST's hands, by which He gathers in His harvest ? If those plague spots of society are suffered to remain

by our neglect or shortcoming they must spread, and eat into our nation as a canker. And what will the harvest then be, should the LORD come to visit us? "How long shall the land mourn, and the hosts of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?"*

"In the day thou shalt make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow."†

Once more, ought we not to attend to God's work amongst ourselves, in our own immediate neighbourhood, our acquaintance, our household, and our family? Shall we not everywhere on our right hand, and on our left, find opportunities of Christian labour?

Every Christian is a workman of CHRIST JESUS, hired into His field, his appointed work set him, infinite wages offered him in free grace and glory. Every Christian is called to be a labourer of the LORD. Every Christian should be a missionary, not only those who are sent out, not the ordained ministry and priesthood only. They have their special offices, but as bound to CHRIST's work, all are kings and priests, all a royal priesthood to offer up acceptable sacrifices, yes every one of us is in this sense a missionary, and has his proper missionary duties, and this every serious and earnest Christian feels.‡

* Jerem. xii. 4.

† Isaiah xvii. 11.

‡ See Sermons for Working Men, by the Rev. W. J. Butler.

Is it not one chief evidence of the value which we set on our spiritual blessings, that we long and yearn to impart them unto others? If our own souls are really precious in our sight, then will the souls of others be also equally precious.

And the LORD works by means. He might for anything we could tell have tried all men, and saved His elect directly, and in a moment. But He hath made the world a field, His saved ones a harvest. He began the work by being Himself made flesh, and sent into the world. He enlarged the work by sending out twelve Apostles. He extended it further by sending out the seventy. He advanced it in His Ascension by the Apostolic ministry. He has spread it on ever since by earthen vessels, by men of like passions with ourselves. He sets His work before them, puts His Spirit in them, prepares them with His gifts, arms them with His Word, if they be willing blesses their toil, and so works by them. He has therefore His chosen priesthood, His peculiar ministry descended from the Apostles by spiritual inheritance, men set apart and wholly devoted to all His ministerial work—stewards of His mysteries. But then their work is in many ways the work also of all Christians. The Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, are privileges of all the members of the Church. All should contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, all contribute to the perfection and extension of the Christian tabernacle, as all the Israelites

contributed to the beauty and glory of their earthly tabernacle. All are of "one body and one spirit, have one LORD, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and FATHER of all"—in this field high and low "rich and poor meet together" for the common furtherance of the SAVIOUR's kingdom.

Do masters only work in the harvest? Do not labourers also? Do not men and women, and even little children find their place in the universal labour? Is not the land portioned out into properties, properties into farms, farms into fields, fields even divided and marked out into different pieces, that every one may know his place, every one attend to his own duty, every one fulfil his proper task, whether it be superintending and directing, or toiling and working, reaping, binding, shooting, casting, gleaning, building up into ricks? And thus is the harvest of the earth reaped by the joint labour of the whole community.

So in the field and harvest of the LORD, every one has his place, and his work, so only he has the will to perform it strenuously and faithfully. Rich people have their places and tasks, poor people have theirs, bishops and clergy have theirs, the laity have theirs, wise people have theirs, unlearned people theirs, the strong theirs, the weak theirs, the living theirs, the departed theirs. Yea, the holy and glorious Angels are "fellow-servants" and fellow-workers with us. Even the Most High and Living GOD Himself has not scorned that we should be His "fellow-workers." And thus by

the joint labour of all who really work in CHRIST's field will the blessed harvest of His Elect be gathered.

Is not this then the harvest's second voice?

What dost thou as a workman in CHRIST's field? Art thou a rich man and mighty, hast thou not many servants only, but many employers under thee? Dost thou by their means gather in from many fields, and much property, a great rich harvest and large income? Or dost thou sweep the sea with thy ships, and pour forth rich cargoes into all earth's ports, and gather the precious produce of far nations, the harvest of the world's industry in return? Or do thy many looms weave for thee day and night the clothing, as it were, of whole nations, while the harvest of its sale pours in floods into thy coffers?

What dost thou do in GOD's field? How join in His work? What labourers dost thou send out into His harvest? What churches dost thou build, what schools dost thou rear, what ministers and teachers provide for those who depend on thee, for the multitudes gathered together for thy business? Or what missionaries with the Gospel and the means of grace dost thou send out to the colonies, or the heathen nations, whence thou drawest thy luxuries, and thy vast wealth? Thou hast much to answer for; a large portion of CHRIST's work is appointed thee. Thou art called to watch, and to think, and to pray, and to strive as much for His wealth as thou dost for thine own.

Thou shouldst sanctify thy great riches, and take their dangers and their snares from them by abundant diligence in the Saviour's harvest. Thy wisdom, thy power, thy trade, spread over a world, must thou not account for these many world-wide talents ?

It would be sad, if the rich crops upon thy lands were suffered to drop and rot where they stand. Thou wouldst be chargeable with negligence and cruelty. And is it not a sinful neglect, is it not a cruelty which cries to heaven, if thou, with such opportunities and calls for labour sufferest the ripe harvest of immortal souls, for which thou mightest so easily provide, to rot in their ignorance, and unbelief and sin, and drop into a hopeless eternity of misery ?

Are we immediate employers of labour ? Do we assign our work-people their places, and their tasks ; watch them, and superintend them, require of them the due amount of industry, see that day by day they perform their appointed duties ? Has not the LORD set us also our spiritual work ? Are not His eyes ever upon us, those eyes ten thousand times brighter than the sun ? Does He not bid us take up our Cross daily, and follow Him, Who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many ?" The nearer we are brought to those who depend on us, the more we can influence them for good or evil. Immediate employers of labour can wonderfully benefit their work-people when they will. Shall we not then consider that the LORD requires at our hands, only

what we look for at our labourers' hands ? for "we serve the LORD CHRIST;" and we know that He will reckon faithfully and exactly with His servants. Does He not demand that we should consider both their temporal and spiritual welfare as well as our own, that we should urge them in that way by which all missionary work is carried on, by the Word, by example, by prayer, with justice and fairness, with kindness and gentleness, to seek all those spiritual blessings which we partake in, that we should see the young people in particular whom we employ, and to whom we stand, and for whom we must answer, almost as parents, carefully trained in all good and right ways, not merely sent to church once on Sundays as to a kind of police office, to keep them out of mischief, but conversed with, warned, instructed in the evenings, or at other suitable times, as little ones of CHRIST JESUS, as lambs of His fold, for whose gain or loss we must answer ? How necessary is this in particular, when children are taken from school so very early, at eight or nine years old, before any good habits can be found, or any real knowledge imparted.

Will our Master excuse us if we look well to our fields, if we see that our work-people do their duty, if we require the proper amount of labour, and store away the plentiful harvest with such diligence, and yet take no thought, use no pains, to gather their souls into His garners ?

And you who labour so diligently and earnestly with your own hands, ploughing, reaping, binding,

you also have your missionary work, and your missionary tools, the word, the life, prayer. You can preach the good sermon of a holy example. You can speak "good words and comfortable words" unto your brethren; a "word in season how good is it!" Yea, God says, "A word is better than a gift." You can warn sinners, you can comfort mourners, you can convict those wealthier than yourselves by contentment, by holiness, by love, by charity, by the "widow's mite" in your deep poverty.

You also can labour thus at home faithfully and earnestly in your missionary work, the work of priests and prophets, of martyrs and Apostles, of Angels and Archangels, yea, of JESUS Himself. And for what we call more particularly, missionary work, opportunities for the most part are offered you; and it is the duty of those who watch for your souls to supply them to you with all care, either by means of parochial associations for this the Church's great task, or by other ways, by which the offerings of all, even of the poor, so precious in God's sight, greater by CHRIST'S own word than the outpourings of the rich, may go out, in ministers and teachers, as in the hands of the LORD, to draw the poor heathen out of the jaws of hell, to provide for the emigrants, or the convicts, gone out from our own shores.

Will you then work so hard, toil and moil so in your honest labours, and will you not also sanctify them by these so acceptable tributes to the

LORD? Will He not take them when you present them to Him, wash them in His blood, store them away for you in heaven? Will He not give you a precious return for them, when He makes you rest at last in Abraham's bosom in Paradise.

And doth He not in particular bid us all pray, give us a missionary prayer? He bids us lift up our eyes. He bids us observe that the harvest is plentiful. He bids us cry to the LORD of the harvest, "Send forth labourers into Thy harvest." How then can any of us excuse himself from missionary prayers. Our LORD Himself puts them carefully into our mouth. He repeats the commandment again and again, and He promises to give to our prayers the souls of those who "sin not unto death."

Shed, O LORD! then, the spirit of grace and supplication upon us, that we may look upon Thee whom we have pierced by our neglect, that we may consider the voice of Thy dear wounds, telling us in such tender accents of love, how precious to Thee are the souls for which Thou diedst.

And at this time the calls of the LORD of the harvest are loud. Urgently does He cry for labourers in His harvest.

We have to make up for the indolence and waste of many generations. We have to repair the neglect of our forefathers: we have to meet the needs of a vast overflowing population: we have to do our own work, and the work of those who overlooked it

in time past. And the hearts of CHRIST's people *have* been stirred. At home and abroad many labourers have been provided. High and low, rich and poor, have joined together at CHRIST's call, to send them out into His field. Fifteen hundred churches have risen up, and mostly such as the poor and needy can worship in. Schools have been built in the darkest and deepest recesses of iniquity, and are establishing everywhere, where it is possible. Priests and teachers have been provided, and are trained to deeper earnestness, self-denial and love. A few years ago a few isolated missionaries, separate one from another, half broken-hearted with the hopelessness of their task, without counsel and without order, though with blessed faith and energy, were striving and struggling with the torrent of sin in our colonies, and with the overwhelming masses of heathenism and idolatry in them and around them. Honour and blessing be to them for their labours and successes, though the harvest was so vast, and they so few and feeble.

But now fourteen Bishoprics have been lately founded there. CHRIST's labourers go out in bands, under proper guidance and direction. Order and harmony follow. Colleges rise, fresh labourers grow on the soil. Places and duties are parted out. The work goes blessedly on. Those also who were sent become senders—our colonial churches send out missions, the seed reproduces itself. The arm of the LORD is made bare, and the nations behold

it.* “Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their souls shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow: and I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the LORD.”†

At the same time one cannot help seeing that the enemy is very active, that his messengers, and missionaries are busy at their fearful work, “sowing the wind, to reap the whirlwind.” It almost seems as if he was now coming down in great wrath, knowing that his time is short, here openly propagating and maintaining unbelief, wickedness and impurity; here transforming himself into an angel of light, taking fair names of liberality and wisdom and philanthropy. He appears especially labouring to secure to himself the rising generation, to pluck the young out of the Church’s arms, and catch them in his ruinous hidden snares.

How many, how active must his ministers be to circulate that hideous number of ungodly or foul books and tracts which has been already mentioned.

* See Charge of the Bishop of New Zealand.

† Jerem. xxxi. 12.

How also does he sap and mine under the foundations of our holy faith! How labour to pass a mere show of godliness upon us for the true spirit of Christian devotion! Certainly he is very busy in the LORD's field: and is it not fearful to think, that all which the LORD rejects falls into Satan's power? All the souls which are not counted meet for salvation become part of the enemy's harvest. How many then are daily sinking before his industry, how many is he binding fast in chains of hopeless darkness!

We see then that there is a mighty strife between good and evil, that the conflict is rising to its height, that both the harvest of CHRIST JESUS, and the harvest of the enemy are busily and industriously advancing. We seem coming to that point when as a Church of GOD we must overcome mightily, or be grievously overcome, when we as a nation in particular must render His accumulated fruits to GOD or be reaped into the ghastly storehouses of the evil one. It is so in this country; it is so in our colonies; it is so throughout our whole missionary field. Is it not so in our own neighbourhoods and homes?

Are not the labourers now called and that loudly by the SAVIOUR, out of the marketplace, out of that false worldliness and carelessness in which they have long stood idly? Are they not as Christians and Churchmen called, now if ever, to take a decided step, to show a bold front, to hire themselves openly and seriously to their SAVIOUR, to devote

themselves as earnest faithful servants each in his proper place, to the great missionary work at home and abroad, which the LORD now, on His part, so earnestly presses upon us ?

Yes, the harvest is full ripe. Why stand ye here all the day idle ? There is no time to be lost. The white-robed servants of the King of kings and LORD of lords are sweeping on apace. They are reaping, and binding, and gathering a rich and plentiful harvest. They are bestirring themselves, and encouraging one another fervently and hopefully to the glorious work : and Satan and his angels are hotly, though in vain, stirring and fighting to drive them from the fields.

Hearst thou not the noise of the great spiritual conflict ? Hearst thou not the loud trumpets of the enemy pealing wild defiance against the Blessed SAVIOUR ? Hearst thou not the still small voice swelling up in earnest hearts, and re-echoing from faithful lips with a mightier and prevailing sound against it ?

The labourers are gone forth ; they are busy at their work ; they hold the sword and spear, like the Jews of old, while they are diligently and industriously accomplishing their tasks. "They cry one to another." Hill speaks to valley, field calls to field. High and low, rich and poor, take up the joyful battle cry, watch while they toil under the banner of the Cross. They wait and pray wistfully for complete reunion amongst themselves. They long and strive mightily for the furtherance of CHRIST'S

work. They perform without delay the tasks immediately before them. And the LORD and His angels are among them, and the blessed harvest of souls makes progress.

Brother, art thou yet among those labourers? Art thou yet devoted to the SAVIOUR'S service. Hast thou yet joined His reapers? With their sweet songs of love and joy amongst themselves, with their bold battle-cries against the oncoming adversaries, with their cheerful industry, with their joyous self-denials, with the peace shining among the sweat drops on their brow, with their eager eyes fixed on the everlasting recompense—they call thee (if thou hast not yet done so) to quit the vain noisy market-place, the busy restless world, where there is no home, no friend, no comfort.

“Come join in our company,” they say to thee, “come work in our field, come gather in our harvest. Our toil is sweet, our labours are blessed, our pains are full of joy, our strife full of glory, our lips full of songs, our hearts full of peace. Stay not behind any longer; the harvest is nearly done, the summer is almost over; and thy life is passing speedily away; and the LORD who calls thee may never call thee any more.”

Strike off the chains of the evil one, tread underfoot all hesitation and doubt. Cast away thy garment of lukewarmness and worldliness; and whether it be morning, or the third, or the sixth, or the ninth, or even the eleventh hour with thee, plunge at once with steady unflinching resolution

into the LORD's work; and thou wilt wonder to see, how many hands are helping thee, how many blessed labourers are stirring with thee in the harvest field, how many saints will come out all around thee like stars in the night, and how full the heaven above thee is of bright angel hosts, who are also "fellow workers" with thee, and how graciously the LORD Himself fights for thee, and works in thee; and what it is to have Him on thy side.

If the hour were yet darker and drearier, the sky wilder and more stormy, if the battle were more dreadful and murderous; if the servants of the LORD were yet more scattered and few in number, if they were oppressed and persecuted without mercy; if it were now, as it will be when the man of sin is revealed, and the powers of evil let loose upon the Church, and the whole world seems one harvest of the evil one: still we know that even then, there would be a remnant for CHRIST's servants to gather, a gleanings after harvest to which they might diligently devote themselves. There will be wheat then, holy souls, here and there throughout the field, which the gleaners of the LORD, His oppressed servants, will gather out of the midst of the stubble and the fire. And they will be honourable witnesses to Him in that hour, and their bundles of living souls will be precious in His sight. And according to the sharpness of the trial, and the burden of the affliction, and the multitude of temptations, will be the industry, and diligence, and recompense of the few then found

faithful. For whether they are few or many, the "eyes of the LORD are over the righteous and His ears are open unto their prayers," and "all things are theirs, and they are CHRIST's, and CHRIST is GOD's;" and "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places when it shall hail coming down on the frost; and the city shall be low in a low place."

"Wherefore blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass"—that never neglect the great Missionary work of CHRIST, but by prayer and alms and love, send forth thither the labourers of the LORD, His ministers and His teachers.

This then is what the harvest's second voice requires of us, even to consider if we have yet bound ourselves to CHRIST's work, whether we are yet labouring in His field; if we are working in His harvest as earnestly as the children of this world are toiling in theirs; if as penitents we are endeavouring in deep thrice fervent love to provide food for the lambs which the SAVIOUR bought with His own blood; if having much forgiven, we are endeavouring to return a rich thank offering of souls converted through our means, our self-denial, our toil.

IF we find our Christian work trying, if we have friends to part from, indulgences to lay by, pleasant society to give up, laughter, or scorn, or opposition to endure, that we may render unto the LORD His fruits, and carry on the work of the harvest, if sometimes the brain reels, and the eyes swim, and the lips groan, and the heart is rent with the anguish and agony of the conflict and the toil; if we sometimes seem ready to faint for hunger, and thirst, and weariness, on the stormy hill, or in the stifling valley; if our labours appear baffled, and industry ineffectual, if we are almost ready to cry out with Elijah, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life;" then let us remember that the harvest has yet another voice, that it speaks aloud to us of another Truth, that it discourses to us, of what is close at hand, though seldom thought of, namely, the "end of all things."

Are there not eyes watching us which we see not, voices speaking concerning us which we hear not? How soon will the mighty Angel, standing with his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, with his rainbow crown, his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by Him that liveth for

ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer, and the mystery of God be finished. How soon will the great voice come out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"* How near is that "white cloud on which one sits, like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle!" And how soon will the angel come out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sitteth on the cloud, "Thrust in Thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for Thee to reap: for the harvest of the earth is ripe." "And He that sate on the cloud thrust in His sickle in the earth, and the earth was reaped." How soon will that be!

"Then cometh the end," saith the Scripture; it is a solemn thought. Look to the end, runs the proverb. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" and this is the end of all things; and the end of all things tries all things, shows their real worth.

Then ends the course of this world; then ends its business, then end its pleasures; then end its distinctions of rank, wealth, poverty, beggary: then end its buying, and selling, and getting gain; then end its kingdoms, and their pomp and their glory; its stately palaces, its gay houses, its thronged cities, its busy market-places, its crowded ports, its commerce and trade. Then end its mirth and gladness, its sorrow and tears, its health and its sick-

* Rev. xvi. 17.

ness, its joy and its pain. Then end its friendships, relationships, unions, except as far as they are in the LORD. Then end the triumphing of the wicked, the afflictions of Saints, the power of the oppressor, the cry of the oppressed. Then ends all change, all the changes and chances of this mortal life, its births, and its deaths, its meetings and its partings, its liftings up, and castings down. Then ends all falsehood, hypocrisy, self-deceit, the excuses and pretences with which men beguile themselves, the delusions by which they hide themselves from themselves; the shames also, and reproaches cast on God's people, all end then; then end all opportunities of repentance for the fallen, all danger of falling for those who stand. "Alas, alas, that great city wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness, for in one hour is she made desolate." "And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all."*

Try the things of this world by the end, and what are they? Nothing, less than nothing, if it be possible. Yes, but the end is eternity. For this earth and this heaven, and this time, and these changes in which we live, all end then: and behold God makes all things new, and He makes them all unchanging, eternal.

"It is done;" how much is in that word, what terror to the sinner, what comfort to the Saint.

* Rev. xviii. 19 and 14.

For all this time is the preparation for that end. "Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."* The end strips off the husk of things, that the kernel of things may appear. It withdraws the veil of the Visible from the awful face of the Invisible; it quenches the sun of this world in the blaze of the appearing Sun of Righteousness; and "who may abide the day of His coming? Who may stand when He appeareth?"

Again, it is the hour of the last change; when they who mourn shall laugh, they who laugh mourn, when they who weep shall sing, they who sing weep; when the great shall become little, the little become great, the high be brought down low, the low be lifted up high, the rich become poor, the poor become rich; when the last shall be first, and the first last; when the things highly esteemed among men shall turn out abominations in the sight of God; when they who took the lowest seat in the kingdom of heaven shall be told to come up higher amidst the thrones of Saints; when they who say, "LORD! LORD! have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" shall hear the answer, "I never knew you, depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." It is an hour when they

* Heb. xii. 26.

shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the FATHER, while the children shall be many of them cast out.

Again, it is the hour of the great Division ; when many of those here mingled, and, as it were, fastened together in bonds of union and love, that appear as if they would never be broken, will be separated and parted asunder, as far as from heaven to hell, and for all eternity. Those who part then will never meet any more. Then with unerring judgment will the LORD divide the righteous and unrighteous, as "a Shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Then will those who, perhaps, have seemed equally good to men, turn one to the right hand, and the other to the left : then will brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, parents, children, be found on different sides of the great wide gulf. Then will all be able to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth the LORD, and him that serveth Him not. Then will all be judged and ordered only according to their doings, to their true and real holiness or sinfulness. These will be the only distinctions then, these the rules and lines of separation. Then will one line gather in all the Elect, the other all the reprobate. Without respect of person, without respect of dignity, of relationship, of affection, will these lines search through, and part the whole innumerable multitude. "And these shall go away

into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal."

It is the hour also of trial and recompense. Then will God render unto every man the fruit of his doings. Then in the flesh and spirit will every man receive the exact reward of all his works, "whether they be good, or whether they be evil."

All that is done in this world, in deed, word, and thought, will come out clearly in the great judgment blaze, to be laid in the balance of unerring justice, to be accounted for with the utmost exactness. The books of God will be opened; and there is no omission there, no mistake there. Everyone's doings will be accurately recorded, and their recompense exactly calculated; and the sum of each of our lives will appear, whether it be for us, or whether it be against us; we shall not be able to deny it, or gainsay it. It will be evident in our own consciences, evident to all creatures, evident to the Judge. Then shall we perceive how "the tree is known by its fruits;" then see how every evil doing and neglect of the evil, and unprofitable, receives its due wages of misery and shame, and how every patient act of love and obedience receives its fitting but free bounties of everlasting consolation and joy. Then shall we learn what it is to have offended one of CHRIST'S little ones, and made them turn out of the pathway of Salvation; and what it is to have converted a sinner from the error of his ways, and saved a soul from the everlasting torments.

Then shall we at last understand the real mean-

ing and importance of this present life, when we find for what a hereafter it was the one appointed preparation time. Then shall we learn who was ever beside us, whom we served, or whom we neglected, when the LORD says to us, "I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in ; naked, and ye clothed Me ; I was sick, and ye visited Me ; I was in prison and ye came unto Me." Or "I was an hungred, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison, and ye did it not unto Me." Then shall we find how blessed it is to have fulfilled, how horrible to have missed, the good and holy work of love, to which we were called and ordered as labourers in CHRIST's present harvest.

For a harvest is coming where we shall be not the ground, nor the labourers, but the ripe crop itself ; where we shall be not the reapers, but the reaped ; not the binders but the bound, not the gatherers but the gathered. "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels ;" and the ripe crops of the field, the wheat and the tares, are the quick and the dead, all the innumerable generations of mankind, small and great, good and evil, standing ready for the sickle of the Eternal SOW.

For He will speak ; and they will rise. "Those who are in the graves shall come forth." "Thy dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the

earth shall cast out her dead.”* And “I saw,” S. John says, “the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to his works.”

What a sight will that harvest be; when “they who are alive and remain shall not prevent those who are asleep,” when in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the whole harvest of the LORD shall stand trembling before Him; numberless as the grains that cover the whole earth, shaking as the corn bowing before the wind; ready and “full ripe” for judgment, as the yellow crops for the sickle. Then, in an instant will the risen bodies of men, re-inspired with their souls, and changed according to the will of GOD, so as to be able and fit for the eternity then remaining, come up each out of its resting place, and they shall be joined with the living, who will also be changed. Then will they all be assembled before the “great white throne;” not one will be wanting; not one hair lost.

Then will the “LORD of the harvest” on His throne send forth His mighty angels, those whom He forbade while the world lasted to pluck up the tares, lest they should root out the wheat also. Then will He send them forth as the mighty labourers in that vast harvest, with the sharp sickle

* Isaiah xxvi. 19.

of His unerring word. And they shall part asunder that innumerable multitude, and they shall pluck up all the tares and weeds, all wicked and unprofitable servants; and bind them in bundles to be burned, but reap the wheat with care, gather up the ears, glean up every corn of wheat, and bind them in sheaves for the garners of the LORD. With chains of darkness, and remorse, and horror, and despair will they bind the damned for the eternal torments. They will "bind them hand and foot." They would struggle if they could.

But with bands of eternal peace, of perfect righteousness, and spotless purity, will they bind the Elect for the eternal joy. Their bands shall be crowns, and robes, and flowers of pure gold and everlasting blessedness.

And the LORD shall speak. He shall bid every one answer for himself, utter his own whole life, as the angels set him forth upon his trial. And He will declare the blessing and the curse. And the garners of His love, and the garners of His wrath shall open, and reveal their infinite and eternal treasures of bliss here, of anguish there, which He hath prepared before the foundation of the world: and they shall receive at once each his appointed increase from mankind. It is long to write. But in a moment it will be done. The LORD shall speak, and lo the harvest is reaped.

And when the harvest is reaped, and stored away, then "It is done," then all is over. Then death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire, which is

the second death. Then cometh the end, when God shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the FATHER; when He shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power; for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the SON also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

And "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of God." But great and awful things are said of it. It is the Great Day of GOD ALMIGHTY. The Day—a day of wrath, and a day of clouds and thick darkness. The great and terrible Day—a day cruel with wrath and fierce anger—a day when all faces shall gather blackness—when the heaven and the earth flee away from the Face of Him that sitteth on the throne—when the heavens are rolled up as a scroll—and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up—the day of the wrath of the Lamb—when the LORD shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm with the indignation of His anger, and with the flames of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. And the trumpets of heaven, and the shout of the Archangel, and the voice of God in and above all will be heard; and the innumerable angels will be sweeping to and fro on their appointed tasks; and

the devil with his angels will stand forth as accusers; and the secrets of all hearts will be made manifest, the most secret mercies and compassions, the most hideous deeds and deep buried thoughts which earth dares not whisper will come forth; every scroll of every conscience be unrolled.

And the LORD will be sitting upon His glorious throne, and none may shrink from His bar when He calls them.

And if that be the harvest of God, and if there are in the garner of His wrath the darkness, and the anguish, and the torments, the shame and confusion, the weeping and the wailing, the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched; and in the garner of His love, the light, and the joy, the songs of saints and angels, the marriage feast of the Lamb, the rivers and trees of life, the crowns, and the robes, and the thrones, the presence of the Lamb, the Face of the Living God, the unutterable bliss of that great vision; and "all those good things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man;" and if we must come so soon to that end; be reaped, and gathered so speedily for one or other of those garner; then does the harvest which we see, and reap, and gather ourselves, speak to us, and that very loudly, of the end which we are hastening to, and of its vast importance.

Such is the third voice of harvest, when it speaks to us as the growth of the field, the subjects of the judgment.

What Fruit then dost thou bear as the ground which CHRIST sows? What work dost thou do as a labourer whom CHRIST hires?

What place shalt thou be housed in for eternity, at the Harvest which CHRIST garners?

These are the questions of the season—these the voices of the harvest. Am I a fruitful or a barren field? Am I a faithful labourer, or trifling idler? Am I a wheat grain or a tare for God's harvest? Ask your soul these questions. Ask them to-night—who knows if the harvest may not come before the morrow? Give your soul no rest till it makes you an answer of peace.

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